

MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING
Held on Wednesday 15 January 2020 at Chace Community School

Governors: Mr J Ellis (Primary), Ms H Kacouris (Primary), Mrs J Leach (Special), Mr J Donnelly (Secondary), Mr T Hellings (Primary).

Headteachers: Mr D Bruton (Secondary), Ms K Baptiste (Primary), Ms R Datta* (Special), Ms C Fay* (Pupil Referral Unit), Ms N Husband (Primary), Ms M O’Keefe / Ms T Day (Secondary), Mr D Smart* (Primary)

Academies: Vacancy, Ms H Thomas (Chair), Mrs A Goldwater, Ms A Nicou, Mrs L Sless, Mrs A Cattermole*

Non-Schools Members:

16 - 19 Partnership Mr K Hintz*
Early Years Provider Ms A Palmer
Teachers’ Committee Mr J Jacobs
Education Professional Mr C Seery
Head of Admissions Ms J Fear
Overview and Scrutiny Committee Cllr S Erbil*

Observers:

Cabinet Member Cllr R Jewel*
School Business Manager Ms S Mahesh
Education Funding Agency Ms Goodacre
Director of Education Mr P Nathan
Head of Finance Challenge Mr N Goddard
Finance Manager Mrs L McNamara
Resources Development Manager Mrs S Brown
Graduate Trainee: Ms L Nasby
Clerk: Alice McLellan

** italics denotes absence*

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND MEMBERSHIP

- (i) Apologies for absence were received from Ms Datta, Ms Fay, Mr Smart, Mrs Cattermole, Mr Hintz, Cllr Erbil and Cllr Jewel.
- (ii) **Membership**
NOTED that:
 - (a) Mr Lamb had resigned from the Schools Forum. The Forum suggested there should be full representation and it would be better if the vacancy was filled by a Secondary Academy Headteacher.
 - (b) Mr Hellings was welcomed as a new Primary Governor.
 - (c) The Forum was informed that this was Ms Seery last meeting of the Schools Forum. Ms Seery was thanked for all her work and support to the Schools Forum.

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

An opportunity was provided for Members to declare an interest whether pecuniary or otherwise regarding any of the items on the agenda. No declarations were made.

3. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

RECEIVED and agreed the Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 December 2019.

4. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION/DECISION

(i) Schools Budget – 2019/2020 Monitoring Update

RECEIVED a report providing details of the DSG budget monitoring position for 2019/20.

REPORTED that there no changes to the DSG allocation. Since the last update, there was a variance due to an in increase in outborough placements. The current overspend was projected at £4.09m.

The Forum noted and received the update on the budget position.

(ii) Schools Budget Update 2020/21: Update

RECEIVED a report on the proposed budget position for 2020/21 and the schools' funding formula.

NOTED:

(a) Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Settlement 2020/21

From the indicative information provided at the last meeting, the Forum was advised that the Schools Block funding had decreased by £1.48m. The actual 2020/21 DSG allocation was slightly less than indicative figures due to a drop in pupil numbers. The decrease in pupil numbers was also reflected by a reduction of £0.01m for CSSB.

At the same time, there had been an increase in the pupils eligible for free school meals.

(b) Draft Budget and Formula Factors 2020/21

Following the agreement of the Forum to the LAC and 0.5% transfer of funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block, disapplication requests had been submitted to the DFE and was approval awaited.

(c) Proposed Formula Factors and Unit Rates 2020/21

The Forum was informed since the papers for the meeting were circulated, the data had been further assessed and it was found, due to the decrease in pupil numbers at PFI schools, there was a shortfall in funding for the PFI contribution. It was proposed that the PFI shortfall be met by amending the Ever 6 unit rates rather than reviewing all the unit rates.

It was commented that it was intolerable that money was being taken from schools to fund empty schools and that it was important to ensure all PFI schools in the borough were full. In response to a question, it was confirmed that additional funding required to meet the shortfall was in the region of £200k.

The Forum was advised that the minimum funding guarantee would remain at 1.84%.

(d) It was confirmed the pension contribution for support staff would decrease by 4.5% following an actuarial review.

(e) It was confirmed when the DFE had validated the unit rates and allocations, the indicative budgets would be circulated to schools. This was likely to be at the end of January and final budgets from all three blocks would be circulated at the end of February / early March 2020.

RESOLVED to agree the 2020/21 unit rates as included in the papers for the meeting and the amended rates for the Ever6 FSM factor of £553.25 (Primary) and £805.18 (Secondary).

The Forum noted and received the 2020/21 DSG settlement and subsequent draft budget.

(iii) Scheme for Financing (2020/21)

RECEIVED a report detailing the changes required to the local Scheme for Financing for maintained schools.

REPORTED following the consultation, the paper detailed the changes required to the Scheme to reflect the reduction in the threshold for retaining surplus balances of 8% for primary and special schools. The other changes required to the Scheme included the revisions to the EU thresholds for tendering.

NOTED that the DfE may seek some prescribed changes following the consultation on financial transparency. The Forum would be advised of any prescribed changes.

RESOLVED that maintain schools members agree to the proposed changes to the Scheme for Financing 2020/21.

(iv) High Needs Strategy: Update

RECEIVED a report summarising the provision available and developments to increase places to support pupils with high level of Special Education Needs & Disability (SEND) and Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).

REPORTED that;

(a) Analysis

(i) National Overview

Data from the Office of National Statistics release (ONS) showed an increase of pupils with an ECHP from 2.8% to 3.1% of the total pupil population. Enfield was close to the national average increase of ECHPs. There had been a reduction in the total number of pupils in Enfield by -0.2%. There were variances in figures within the ONS report that were explained by using calendar, financial and academic years.

(ii) Local Overview

In Enfield, the main areas of need were ASD, SLCN and SEMH and the demand for support was continuing to increase resulting in the overspend of over £4m highlighted in the Budget Monitoring report.

(iii) Forecast

The Forum was advised if all things remained equal then, based on national and local trends, it was expected that there would be an increase of 300-400 pupils with EHCPs during 2020/2021.

(b) Financial Update

An additional £7m was received for 2020/21.

It was commented that placements in schools were not funded adequately. In response to a **QUESTION**, it was stated that as part of the budget planning, all resources including the additional funding would be used to manage the overspend and the costs associated with pupils with EHCPs currently and expected to be supported. The next stage, during the coming year, would be to review funding arrangements for pupils with EHCPs in special and mainstream schools. It was requested that the review should include Headteacher representatives.

(c) Specialist Provision Update

The strategy to manage increasing demand was to increase the provision of in-borough specialist units and special school places.

NOTED that members were made aware of amendments made to section 5.1.

Members thought it would be useful to identify whether there were gaps between the age of children when referred for EHCPs and the age of children when EHCPs were

received. Currently speech and language assistance could not be accessed without an EHCP, this incurred the extra cost of the EHCP. It was stated that speech and language was a priority across the Local Authority and there was an aim to provide training and support to staff to help lower level needs. The Forum was pleased the expansion of Durants School had enabled some outborough children to move back into Enfield. The aim for the Authority was to continue to keep children in-borough and to reduce use of outborough independent provision.

In response to a **QUESTION**, an Early Years review was being completed and a review of speech and language had been carried out. A member highlighted the pressure that 2-year checks put on speech and language often led to incorrectly identifying issues with speech and language. It was suggested that the checks would be better if they were carried out in an environment known to the child. Members discussed the issue of the health sector not engaging with the education sector.

(d) Nurture Groups

Following feedback from the Forum, the Authority was reviewing the criteria for Nurture Groups and had advised schools that there might be a change to funding. If the Forum was agreeable, schools would be informed week beginning 20 January. Officers were working on options that will be initially discussed with Education Resources Group.

The Authority was aware that educational outcomes of children in Nurture Groups was good but the need for this type of provision was increasing. The Forum was advised that there were approximately 15 schools with a Nurture Group.

It was noted that some schools had given up their Nurture Groups when they were not required.

It was confirmed that that the Forum would be kept up to date on the review. When criteria had been agreed letters would be sent to all schools.

(e) Post 16 Provision

There had been an increase in the number of students supported by internships. A member suggested it would be useful to find out how many of these students were still employed following their internships.

In response to a **QUESTION** regarding evaluating placements, it was stated that this year the main focus had been on the quality of provision. This was a challenge when children were settled in a provision, which was not of a high enough quality. In addition, work was continuing to reduce costs and reviewing attendance; where attendance was low, then the funding was being adjusted accordingly.

5. **WORKPLAN**

RESOLVED to update the Workplan with items arising from this meeting.

ACTION: MRS BROWN

6. **FUTURE MEETINGS**

NOTED:

(a) The next meeting as Wednesday 4 March 2020, 5:30pm, Chace Community.

(b) The dates of future meetings:

- 6 May 2020 – venue tbc
- 15 July 2020 – venue tbc

7. **ITEMS TO REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL**

NOTED there were no items to remain confidential.